(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) The inflation of essential items has moderated in the recent months. WPI based monthly composite inflation of 30 essential commodities for the last three years is indicated below:

Monthly inflation for essential commodities (%)

Month	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Apr	4.55	4.38	5.91	3.26
May	4.91	3.33	7.64	1.67
Jun	4.90	3.10	8.59	0.85
Jul	4.83	4.30	5.44	2.84
Aug	4.81	4.23	5.30	2.73
Sep	5.87	3.26	7.24	1.19P
Oct	5.30	4.04	7.66	0.50P
Nov	4.98	5.23	6.63	
Dec	5.25	4.62	6.42	
Jan	6.09	3.86	5.14	
Feb	3.88	5.14	4.24	
Mar	3.74	5.71	3.38	

P-Provisional

(c) and (d) Containment of inflation remains high on the agenda of the Government. Anti-inflationary policies of the government include strict fiscal and monetary discipline, rationalization of duties of essential items on that there is no undue burden on the poor, effective supply-demand management of essential commodities through liberal tariff and trade policies, and strengthening the public distribution system.

Promotion in the Central Excise Department

1569. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many promotions were made in the Central Excise Department from Inspector to superintendent from Group -B to Group-A and within Group-A cadres during the last three financial years;

(b) the charge-wise details of General, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Class category in the above; and

(c) the details of backlog in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Increase in Home Loan interest rate

1570. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of increase in interest rates of Housing Loan from the year 2002 till date;

(b) whether the number of persons taking Home Loan has been decreasing due to increasing rate of interest on Home Loan;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government is contemplating to reduce the rate of interest on Home Loan;

(e) if so, by when and extent to which reduction is likely to be affected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) As reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the weighted average lending rate for housing loans by Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) from 2002 onwards is as under:

Year	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Per cent	12.13	11.60	10.66	8.85	8.61	@

Note: The data given are based on the accounts with limit of over Rs. 2 lakh.
@ Information not yet consolidated by the RBI.

(b) and (c) The number of accounts for housing loans in SCBs since 2001-02 is as under:—

Year	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
No. of Accts.	18,16,315	24,46,081	30,35,026	36,66,450	45,21,531	@

@ Information not yet consolidated by the RBI.

It can be observed from above that the number of accounts for housing loans has increased over time.

(d) The interest rates on loans have been deregulated by RBI since 1994. The banks are free to determine the rate of interest with the approval of their respective Boards. The RBI has, however, stipulated that the interest rate on loans by commercial banks upto Rs. 2 lakh should not exceed the Benchmark Prime Lending Rate (BPLR).

(e) Does not arise.

Inclusion of tax benefits in the PCPIR Policy

1571. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received a request from the State Government of West Bengal to consider inclusion of benefit under section 81B of Income-Tax Act in the Petroleum, Chemical and Petro-Chemical Investment Region (PCPIR) Policy;

(b) whether it is a fact that the State Government of West Bengal proposed to develop Haldia as a PCPIR; and

(c) if so, response of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir. The Chief Minister of West Bengal had requested that the benefit under Section 80-IB(5) of the Income-tax Act may be provided in the Petroleum, Chemical and Petro-Chemical Investment Region (PCPIR) Policy ostensibly for the purposes of providing tax holiday to units treated therein. The PCPIR policy approved by the Government of India does not provide for any tax benefits to the units located in the PCPIR. However, the developer or the co-developers of the PCPIR are eligible for benefits under Section 80-IA of the Income-tax Act.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Government of West Bengal has forwarded a project proposal for hosting PCPIR at Haldia spread over the Haldia Municipal Corporation and the Nayachar Islands in Medinapur.